

Americans With Disabilities, 1997

Among the 53 million adults with disabilities in the United States in 1997, 33 million had a severe disability and 10 million needed assistance in their daily lives.

Disability touches many lives — not just the lives of people who must assume their own personal challenge, but also the lives of their families, friends, and coworkers. With one adult in five living with a disability, according to the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP),¹ the consequences are enormous. Information on people with disabilities is sought after by health care providers, manufacturers of assistive devices, and policy makers.

In 1997, almost one in five adults had some type of disability and the likelihood of having a disability increased with age.

Among those aged 45 to 54, 23 percent had some form of a disability and 14 percent had a severe disability. Only 4 percent needed personal assistance. For those aged 80 and older, the proportion increased to 74 percent with some disability, 58 percent with a severe disability, and 35 percent needing assistance.

Among adults under age 25, women were less likely than men to have a disability. However, the relationship reversed for older adults. Because women made up a larger share of older adults than men, they also made up a larger share of people with disabilities. Among all adults, 24 million people with disabilities were men and 28 million were women. Among people with a severe disability 15 million were men and 18 million were women.

¹ Estimates in this chapter are calculated using sample data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation, weighted by population controls based on the 1990 decennial census. As such, these estimates will differ from population estimates computed from either the intercensal estimates program or the 2000 decennial census.

Words That Count

■ **Adults with disabilities** are individuals, aged 15 and older, who meet one or more of the criteria below. An individual would have a **severe disability** if he or she met criteria 1, 4, or 6 or were unable to perform or needed help to perform one or more of the activities in criteria 2, 3, or 5:

- 1) Use a wheelchair, cane, crutches, or a walker.
- 2) Have difficulty seeing, hearing, speaking, or performing physical activities.
- 3) Have difficulty performing one or more selected everyday activities (see ADLs and IADLs below).
- 4) Have a mental or emotional condition that seriously interferes with everyday activities.
- 5) Have a condition that limits working around the house or working at a job.
- 6) Receive federal benefits based on an inability to work.

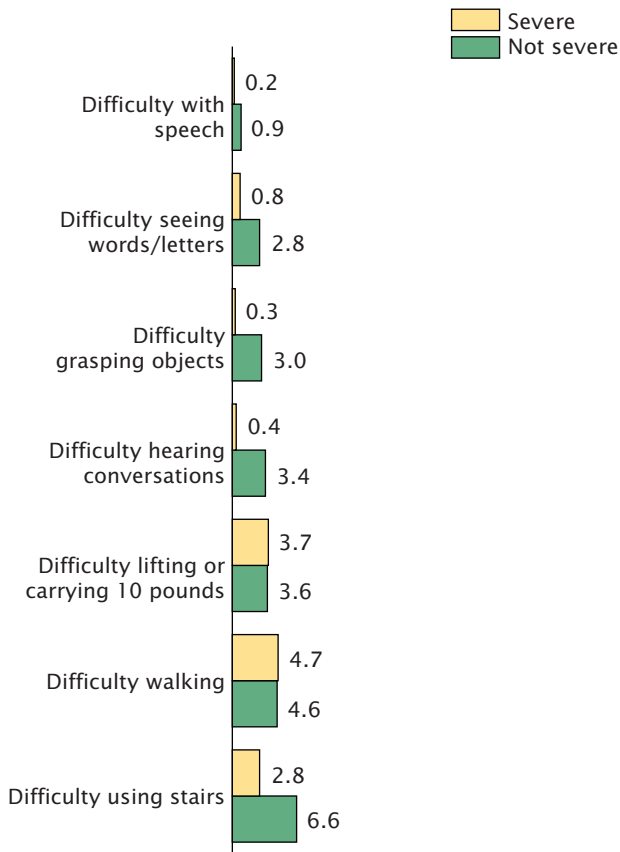
■ **ADLs (activities of daily living)** include getting around inside the home, getting in or out of bed or a chair, bathing, dressing, eating, or toileting.

■ **IADLs (instrumental activities of daily living)** include going outside the home, keeping track of money and bills, preparing meals, doing light housework, taking prescription medicines in the right amount at the right time, and using the telephone.

✓ **Children with disabilities** include those with developmental delays that cause children to be unable to perform activities that other children that same age perform. They also include physical disabilities that inhibit arm and leg movement among children under age 3 and interfere with running and playing among those aged 3 to 5.

Figure 19-1.
Disabilities Among Individuals Aged 15 and Older by Type and Severity: 1997

(Percent of population aged 15 and older)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1996 Panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation, August - November 1997.

People with severe disabilities were more likely than others to be in financial need, according to the SIPP.

Among people aged 25 to 64 with no disability, slightly more than one person in one hundred received some type of cash assistance in 1997. Among those with a severe disability, one in four received cash assistance. Twenty percent received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and 6 percent received some other cash assistance.

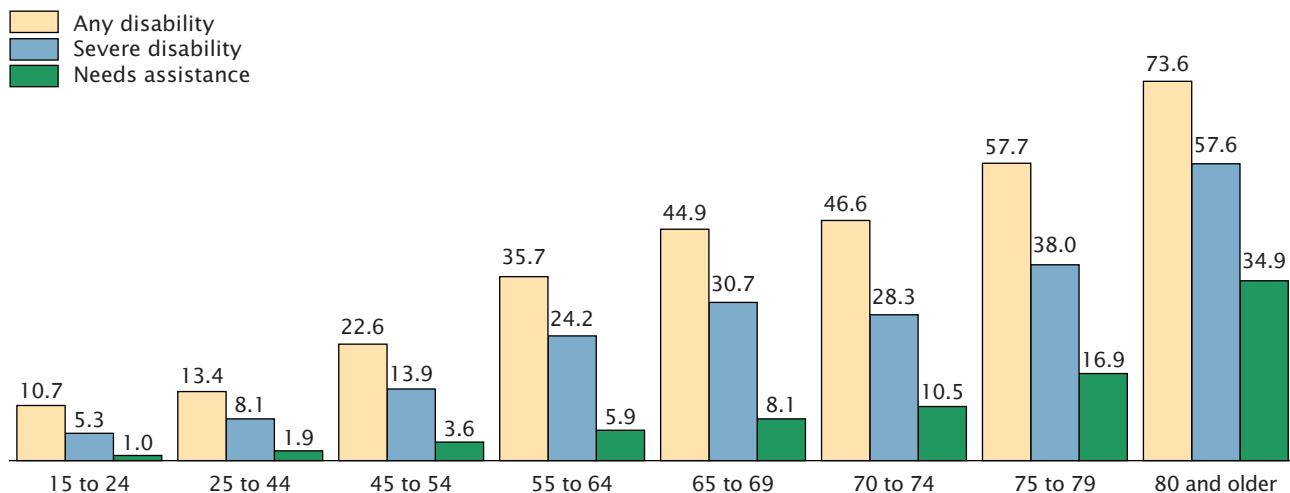
People with severe disabilities were also more likely than those without disabilities to receive food stamps or subsidized housing. Sixteen percent of people aged 25 to 64 with severe disabilities received food stamps compared with 2 percent of people in that age group with no disabilities. Within this age group, 9 percent of people with severe disabilities lived in public or subsidized housing compared with 2 percent of those with no disabilities.

People with severe disabilities were also more likely than others to have low incomes and live in poverty. Eighty percent of people age 25 to 64 with a severe disability lived in a household with an annual income of \$20,000 or less, compared with 44 percent of those with no disability. The poverty rate for individuals this age with a disability was 28 percent, compared with 8 percent for those with no disability.

Among people aged 21 to 64, 84 percent of people with no disability and 82 percent of people with a

Figure 19-2.
Disability Among Individuals Aged 15 and Older by Age and Severity: 1997

(Percent of population in each age group)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1996 Panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation, August - November 1997.

nonsevere disability worked in 1997. However, the share was 31 percent among those with a severe disability. About 14 million people aged 21 to 64 with a disability were employed and 5 million of these men and women had a severe disability.

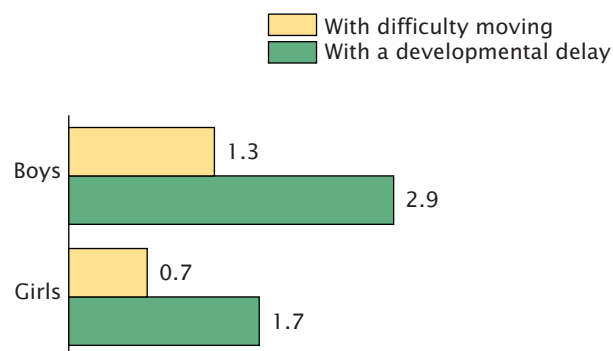
Earnings were lower for people with disabilities. The 1997 median earnings for people with no disability was \$23,700, compared with \$20,500 for those with a nonsevere disability and \$13,300 for those with a severe disability. Among people with disabilities who worked, 34 percent were limited in the amount or kind of work that they could do. Among those surveyed by the SIPP, one in five workers with a disability had difficulty remaining employed or finding a job.

SPOTLIGHT ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Male children suffer from disabilities more frequently than female children.

Information about children with disabilities is important to educators, as well as healthcare and childcare providers. Eight percent of all children under age 15, 5 million children, had some type of disability in 1999, according to the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). However, disability rates varied

Figure 19-3.
Percent of Children Under Age 6 by Sex and Type of Disability: 1999



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1996 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 11, August 1999 - November 1999.

dramatically by sex and age. Among all disabled children under age 15, 38 percent were girls and 62 percent were boys. Although the percentage of children with a disability was less than 3 percent among those under age 6, it was almost 4 times as high among those aged 6 to 14.

A total of 649,000 children under age 6 had some type of disability in 1999, according to the SIPP. Children under age 6 were twice as likely to have a developmental disability (2 percent) as they were to have a difficulty with movement (1 percent).

The share of children with disabilities goes up as children age.

Among children aged 6 to 14, disabilities include developmental disabilities and developmental conditions², mental retardation, learning disabilities, difficulty doing regular schoolwork, and difficulty getting along with others. Physical disabilities include difficulty seeing, hearing, speaking, and walking or running. Children this age may also have difficulty with activities of daily living, including getting around inside or outside the home, getting in and out of bed, taking a bath or shower, dressing, eating, and toileting. Among children aged 6 to 14, 4 million or 11 percent had some type of disability in 1999. While 13 percent of boys had some type of disability, 8 percent of girls did. Of those children who were disabled, 41 percent had a severe disability.

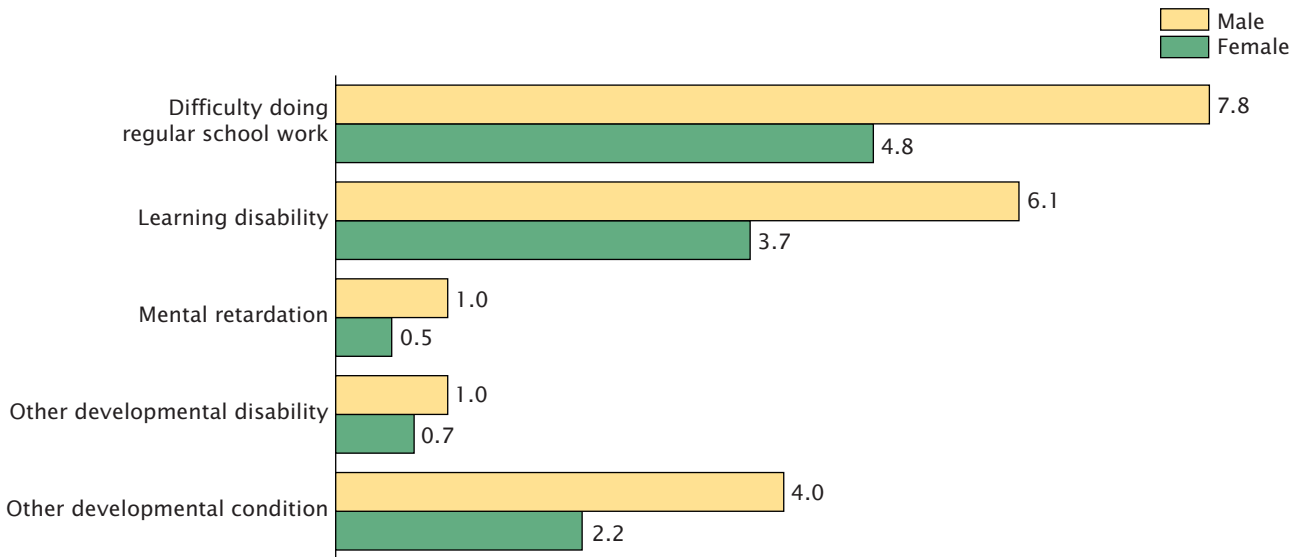
Special educational services may be needed for many children with disabilities. Among children aged 6 to 14 in 1999, 6 percent had a physical, learning, or mental condition that affected the child's ability to do regular schoolwork. Five percent could be classified as having a learning disability, such as dyslexia. Two percent had an emotional or mental condition that made getting along with others difficult. Fewer than 1 percent could be classified as mentally retarded.

In 1999, 2 percent of children aged 6 to 14 had difficulties walking or running and an almost equal share had speech problems. However, the share of children with hearing and seeing difficulties was less than 1 percent each.

² A developmental condition may be temporary, while a developmental disability will remain with a person the rest of their life.

Figure 19-4.

Percent of Children Aged 6 to 14 by Selected Developmental Disabilities: 1999



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1996 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 11, August 1999 - November 1999.

Resources and support vary for children with disabilities.

Among the 5 million children under age 15 with disabilities in 1999, 3 million (58 percent) lived in married-couple households and 2 million (35 percent) lived in single-parent households. The proportion of children with disabilities was about twice as high in single-parent families (12 percent) as in married-couple families (6 percent). The poverty rate among children with disabilities (25 percent) was higher than the rate among children without disabilities (20 percent).

The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

- For more detailed information, consult the following U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Report: *Americans With Disabilities: 1997* by Jack McNeil.
- For complete reports and detailed tables, go to the Census Bureau's World Wide Web site (www.census.gov). Click on "D" and select "Disability."
- Contact the Housing and Household Economic Statistics' Statistical Information Staff at 301-457-3242 or e-mail hhes-info@census.gov.
- For information on publications and other resources, see Appendix A.